

# RETURNING HOME

*Helping Homeless Veterans Find Housing in Their Community of Origin.*

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## Table of Contents

<b>Purpose of Returning Home</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Returning Home Request</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Documentation Checklist</b> .....	<b>8</b>

## Purpose of Returning Home

### *Helping Homeless Veterans Find Housing in Their Community of Origin*

**Concept:** Offer homeless Veteran households the option of returning to their community of origin or to a community where they have available supports to facilitate housing placement. These placements would be supported with resources from the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program.

**Background:** An analysis conducted by the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV) found that 15.3 percent of all homeless Veterans migrated across VISNs in the two-year period of 2011 to 2012. Among chronically homeless Veterans, migration occurred even more frequently and comprised 20 percent of that population. Although the number of homeless Veterans who migrated within a VISN is not known, it would certainly significantly increase the percentage of homeless Veterans who have moved into new communities. For Veteran households that have migrated to metropolitan areas with low housing vacancy rates, the barriers they face to finding suitable housing may be particularly acute. With few supports, these Veterans do not have the family and friends that often offer not only social and emotional support but are frequently the safety net that prevents households from falling into homelessness.

**Plan:** As significant numbers of homeless Veteran households have migrated to communities where they have few supports and limited prospects for finding permanent housing, VA can offer these Veterans the option of returning to their community of origin with the assurance of permanent housing through SSVF, often in collaboration with the VA Medical Centers.

This opportunity provides several benefits:

1. It will reduce homelessness.
2. It will allow Veteran households to return to communities where they are more likely to have familial and social support networks.
3. It may support family reunification.
4. It will reduce competition for scarce affordable housing for those homeless Veterans remaining in communities with low vacancy rates.
5. It may be used to link Veterans to employment, providing the income critical to sustain permanent housing.

The opportunity will be presented to the Veteran after the assessment has been completed and history of moves is understood. It is expected that Veterans agree to return home or relocate to a community where available supports can facilitate successful housing placement.

### **The following Veterans may be eligible for Returning Home:**

- Veterans seeking family reunification and housing with their family or other social support in their community of origin. SSVF must have direct communication with

the social support to ensure that the environment is safe and offers the potential for stable long-term housing.

- Veterans who have identified employment either through HVCES or other resources and need only short-term social service support to facilitate their transition to the arrival community. These Veterans must provide a viable plan for obtaining permanent housing prior to approval for Returning Home funds. This may include having a social support willing to provide housing or an affordable independent housing option awaiting them.
- Veterans who have affordable permanent housing awaiting them in a community where they have familial or social supports.

Prior to supporting any move, SSVF must confirm that adequate supports exist in the community where placement is made.

SSVF will be involved to provide transportation assistance. Under 38 CFR 62.33, SSVF may provide such assistance to facilitate placement into permanent housing. SSVF may also support housing search and inspection efforts, provide case management, and financial assistance for security deposits, rent, and utilities as necessary. SSVF will work with community and VA partners to ensure that appropriate service linkages have been made *prior* to any move.

**Impact:** Homelessness will be reduced, Veterans' quality of life will be better supported over the long-term, and communities with limited available affordable housing stock will be better able to serve those homeless Veterans who have few or no social and familial supports.

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Q: What are the *departure* communities for Returning Home?**

**A:** With the national launch of Rapid Resolution, Returning Home has expanded from Rapid Resolution pilot sites to **all SSVF grants**, regardless of the vacancy rate or rent cost of the departure or arrival community.

**Q: How do we determine appropriateness of an *arrival* community for Returning Home?**

**A:** There are several factors to consider Returning Home as an appropriate option.

- Will Veteran be moving in with familial or social supports?
  - Confirmation must be obtained from the host family/support that the Veteran may reside with them for a minimum of 90 days.
- Does Veteran have a stable permanent housing option awaiting them?
  - Confirmation of their move-in date must be obtained.
- Is the Veteran moving to pursue a viable employment opportunity?
  - Confirmation of their employment offer must be obtained, as well as confirmation that temporary housing is available until they are able to move into independent housing. These Veterans should also demonstrate

that their job will provide adequate income to obtain and remain stable in permanent housing based on the costs of living in the arrival community.

See pages 8-10 for “Returning Home Request,” which must be completed and submitted to your Regional Coordinator for approval prior to any Veteran’s move.

**Q: How do we determine Veteran eligibility for Returning Home?**

**A:** Veterans who are enrolled in SSVF for Rapid Rehousing are the target population, though other Veterans may be considered. Returning Home may be a component of a Rapid Resolution intervention, which could include Veterans who are enrolled under the Homeless Prevention project type in HMIS. On a case-by-case basis, Returning Home can be used for HP Veterans who cannot maintain their current housing and relocation is the best solution to their housing crisis. Please note that Returning Home cannot support Veteran cases that are already placed in permanent housing or who are in possession of a HUD-VASH voucher.

**Q: How do we determine income eligibility?**

**A:** AMI standards in the departure community will be used for SSVF program admission but rent reasonableness of the arrival community should be considered. After the move takes place, the arrival community’s AMI will be used for eligibility *after* recertification. Until that recertification occurs, the departure community’s AMI will be used for eligibility determination.

**Q: Who provides funds for the Veteran’s move?**

**A:** The SSVF grantee in the departure community will provide funds for the Veteran’s move. The SSVF grantee in the departure community may continue to provide TFA until the next recertification is required. The SSVF grantee in the arrival community will be responsible for completing the recertification. If the household remains eligible for services, the SSVF grantee in the arrival community may continue providing services and TFA as needed. Communication between the grantees in both the departure and arrival communities should take place to confirm dates of recertification and avoid duplication of expenditures. Please refer to the HMIS section of this FAQ for information on allowable expenses and documentation requirements.

**Q: Can we use gift cards for gasoline, food and lodging during Veteran’s travel to arrival community?**

**A:** Yes, gift cards for gasoline, food and lodging are allowable for Returning Home. This will be paid for and facilitated by the grantee in the departure community unless alternate arrangements are requested and authorized by the Program Office.

You may calculate the gasoline gift card amount based on the current federal mileage reimbursement rate found here: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/transportation-airfare-pov-etc/privately-owned-vehicle-pov-mileage-reimbursement-rates>

For Veterans who require a “per diem” for food during their travel to the arrival community, please refer to amounts for GSA meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) (found here: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>). Determination of

per diem rate would be an average of maximum allowable M&IE between the departure community and the arrival community. For example, if a Veteran is coming from Los Angeles, CA (departure community), which has an M&IE rate of \$66/day, and traveling to Tampa, FL (arrival community), which has an M&IE rate of \$61/day, the per diem rate during the Veteran's travel would be \$63.50/day. If needed, this same rate could also be applied to each household member included in the SSVF enrollment and travel to arrival community.

If the Veteran requires an overnight stay, please reference the same website above to locate the maximum allowable lodging rate for the city where Veteran will be staying.

For airfare, cost reasonableness should be determined after review of GSA airline city pairs (found here: <https://cpsearch.fas.gsa.gov/cpsearch/search.do>).

Regarding documentation for client files, the SSVF grantee in the departure community must document participant name, amount, and purpose for issuing all gift cards. The SSVF grantee in the arrival community will be responsible for obtaining receipts once the Veteran arrives and must send copies of the receipts to the SSVF grantee in the departure community. Please note that the purchase of gift cards is approved for Returning Home only and is impermissible for all other participants.

**Q: How do the SSVF grantees in both the departure community and the arrival community document Returning Home participation?**

**A:** Veterans who have been approved by your SSVF Regional Coordinator for Returning Home should be enrolled in the Rapid Rehousing (RRH) project type in HMIS, except in rare cases where an HP Veteran receives Returning Home support.

SSVF households receiving Returning Home assistance should enroll households into RRH or HP project types based on their living situation at entry. Within HMIS, Returning Home cases must be identified by adding a service under V2 Services Provided using the Field Response #8: "Returning Home."

Note: If a household is receiving both Returning Home and Rapid Resolution services, two distinct V2 "Type Provided and Subtype Provided" activities should exist in their program record. Also, as noted in page 6, TFA should be indicated according to normal V2 TFA categories (moving costs, transportation, etc.).

Signed ROI to speak with Veteran's familial or social support in arrival community should be uploaded in HMIS, as well as any other supplemental documentation. Grantee in the departure community will keep Veteran's case open in HMIS until they are no longer providing TFA (most likely until the next recertification date) and the case has been fully transferred to the grantee in the arrival community. It is recommended that the grantee in the departure community check in with the Veteran after arrival, as well as follow up with the grantee in the arrival community to see if any further support is required. Additionally, grantees in both the departure and arrival communities must

coordinate to ensure that consistent information is being shared regarding assistance that will be provided to the Veteran upon returning to the arrival community.

**Q: How does the SSVF grantee in the departure community document expenditures for Returning Home in HMIS?**

**A:** See table below.

Temporary Financial Assistance V2 Services Provided 152= SSVF Financial Assistance Type and Sub Type Provided				
5 - Moving Costs	*Moving company	*Pods	*U-Haul	Meal and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) Per Diem for travel ( <i>see page 4 for details</i> )  Hotel accommodations when requiring an overnight stay ( <i>see page 4 for details</i> )
8 – Transportation Services: tokens/vouchers	*Airplane ticket; check-in baggage fees, if needed ( <i>see page 5 for GSA airline city pairs</i> )	*Bus ticket	*Train ticket	Personal owned vehicle (POV) mileage for gasoline ( <i>see pages 4 and 5 for details</i> )
9 – Transportation Services: vehicle repair/maintenance	*Vehicle repair for personal owned vehicle (POV) prior to departure			
14 – Emergency Housing Assistance	EHA for host in arrival community categorized under the Rapid Resolution Service (see Rapid Resolution Compliance Guide: <a href="https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/s">https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/s</a> )			

[svf/docs/SSVF\\_Rapid\\_Resolution\\_Service\\_Compliance\\_Guidance\\_May\\_2019.pdf](#)

\*Indicates expenditures that require proof of three quotes for cost comparison. Please retain for FOIA visits.

**Q: What are the main differences in grantee responsibilities between the departure community and the arrival community?**

**A:** The grantees in the departure communities are responsible for (but not limited to):

- Completing ROI and obtaining confirmation directly from the host household that the Veteran will stay with them with them on a long-term basis (may blend with Rapid Resolution).
- Ensuring that there is a viable housing plan in place prior to Veteran's departure.
- Seeking confirmation that the support person in the arrival community is willing to house the Veteran either permanently or until the Veteran is able to move in to their own stable housing.
- Seeking approval from your SSVF Regional Coordinator (see pages 8-10 for "Returning Home Request").
- Planning details of trip with Veteran only after receipt of approval from your SSVF Regional Coordinator. Approval confirmation will include point of contact (POC) at grantee agency in the arrival community.
- Coordinating Veteran's travel, arrival and care with POC noted above. This may occur via phone and/or email and could include the Regional Coordinators assigned to both the departure and arrival communities.
- Paying for Veteran's move, which must be of reasonable cost, as well as any other allowable costs before the next recertification occurs.
- Maintaining contact with the Veteran during trip to the arrival community.

The grantees in the arrival communities are responsible for (but not limited to):

- Conducting a housing inspection prior to Veteran's move. *This is only for Veterans who have not yet lived with social support in the arrival community, and social support will be receiving TFA through Rapid Resolution. Grantee will notify grantee in the departure community of housing appropriateness. In this scenario, Veteran can only travel to arrival community once housing inspection has been approved by grantee in arrival community.*
  - *Note: The same procedures also apply for Veterans who have identified independent housing in the arrival community and are seeking rental assistance upon move-in.*
- Enrolling Veteran in SSVF program upon Veteran's arrival and providing local case management and other services/referrals as needed. Please note that, for

the purposes of adequately ensuring the Veteran's safety and addressing any potential need for continued care, SSVF enrollment in the arrival community is a requirement.

- Sending pre-loadable gift cards and receipts retained during Veteran's move back to SSVF grantee in the departure community.
- Assisting Veteran with enrolling into local VAMC if eligible. 10 10 EZ found here: <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/1010EZ-fillable.pdf>

Once the Veteran has moved in and is acclimated to the arrival community, SSVF Program Office would like to know how the Veteran is doing. *Optional:* SSVF Program Office is asking the grantee in the arrival community to conduct a follow-up conversation with the Veteran to retrieve the following answers:

- How are you adjusting to your new community? What did you have to do to get used to your new environment?
- How do you feel now that you are staying with/closer to your friends/family?
- Have you been connected to all of the resources that you may need, i.e., VA healthcare, outpatient mental health, employment services, etc.?
- What other resources or services, if any, would you like to be linked to?
- How has your quality of life changed now that you are living in your new community? Could you describe the difference in your livelihood between where you came from and where you are living now?
- What, if anything, about the Returning Home process would you recommend needs improvement?

The answers to these questions will be used by the Program Office to collect qualitative data regarding the efficacy of Returning Home. Please forward answers to these questions to your Regional Coordinator.

**Q: How do we receive approval to assist a Veteran through Returning Home?**

**A:** See below for "Returning Home Request." Please email answers to the questions below to your Regional Coordinator for review and approval prior to any Veteran's move. In your request, please include your grant number. Please keep a record of your email approvals for Returning Home so that you will have them during FOIA visits. The approval email from your Regional Coordinator will include a point of contact for the grantee in the arrival community for coordination purposes.

**Returning Home Request**

- What is the Veteran household's current homeless status?
- What city and state is the Veteran household currently staying in?
- Where does the Veteran want to move and why?

- Is the Veteran currently in possession of a HUD-VASH or Section 8 voucher? *Please note that Returning Home cannot support the porting of vouchers to another area.*
- Is the Veteran able to travel on their own? *Please note that, if an SSVF staff member or other social supports want to accompany the Veteran during their travels, SSVF funds cannot be used to support the staff member nor social supports.*
- Will the Veteran be moving in with social support (a family member, friend, etc.)? If yes, has the grantee received direct confirmation that the social support will house the household on a long-term basis?
- Please briefly describe the living situation that the Veteran will be entering, i.e., spare bedroom, accessory dwelling unit (ADU), their own house/apartment, etc.
- Does the social support who will host the Veteran require assistance through the Rapid Resolution Service? If so, what?
- If the Veteran is moving into independent housing in the arrival community, please describe where they are with the housing location process and provide documentation that housing is available, i.e., an intent to rent document from the landlord. Is the Veteran seeking rental assistance after they move to the arrival community?
- If the Veteran is moving into independent housing in the arrival community, do they have a move-in date? If not, is there a confirmed family or social support who is willing to house the Veteran until they enter stable housing?
- If the Veteran is traveling to the arrival community prior to their scheduled permanent housing move in date, what is the plan for the Veteran to have housing until they can move in? Is there a plan to assist the Veteran in accessing GPD or short-term EHA? If so, please identify the plan to transition the Veteran to permanent housing from GPD or EHA.
- SSVF may approve Returning Home Veterans to utilize EHA funds in the arrival community on a case-by-case basis and only when a permanent housing plan is in place but GPD is not available. These plans must be approved by the SSVF Program Office prior to the Veteran's departure.

- Please provide a list of anticipated costs with estimated amounts. For example, a one-way plane ticket from Los Angeles, CA to Orlando, FL is \$144.00 (source: <https://cpsearch.fas.gsa.gov/cpsearch/search.do>)
- Please provide a summary of the proposed travel plan and what specific follow up services the Veteran may likely require upon arrival.

### **Documentation Checklist**

*For grantees in both the departure and arrival communities.*

- Completed Returning Home Request from the grantee in the departure community. *This should be submitted to and approved by your SSVF Regional Coordinator prior to making any travel arrangements.*
- Email from SSVF Regional Coordinator confirming approval of Returning Home. This will include a Point of Contact (POC) of the grantee in the arrival community that has agreed to accept the Veteran's case. *Grantee in the departure community should have this approval prior to making any travel arrangements.*
- Grantee certifies the utilization of the Returning Home intervention is the most appropriate way to resolve the Veterans homeless crisis and support permanent housing.**
- Grantee certifies the Veteran actively participated and agrees to the goals and objectives of the Returning Home plan.**
- ROI and other enrollment documentation to forward to grantee in the arrival community.
- Written confirmation from familial or social support in arrival community that Veteran can move in permanently or on a long-term basis.
- Receipts of all approved expenditures during Veteran's travel to arrival community.
- Other documentation needed to support TFA expenditures. This must be retained for auditing purposes.